

Message Text

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17

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 CAB-09 COME-00 DOTE-00 EB-11 FAA-00 OMB-01

AID-20 ACDA-19 DRC-01 /154 W
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P 280913Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5441

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 0620

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ETRN, GB, US

SUBJ: GABONESE-AMERICAN RELATIONS AND DC-8

1. HAD LONG AND FRIENDLY CONVERSATION WITH FONMIN OKUMBA
MAY 25. OKUMBA STRESSED EXCELLENT STATE OF U.S.-GABONESE
RELATIONS. HE EVEN COMMENTED THAT THEY SHOULD ALWAYS HAVE
BEEN GOOD, BUT THAT MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF PAST HAD BEEN
CAUSED BY "OTHERS."

2. OKUMBA WENT ON TO SAY THAT EVEN TODAY THERE WERE
"ELEMENTS" AT WORK SEEKING TO SOW DISCORD BETWEEN GABON
AND U.S. THESE ELEMENTS WOULD SEIZE ON ANY OPPORTUNITY AND
WERE FREQUENTLY HARD TO CONTAIN. IT WAS MOST IMPORTANT,
THEREFORE, NOT TO AFFORD THEM ANY SUCH OPPORTUNITY.

3. OKUMBA THEN MENTIONED MATTER OF DC-8. HE STRESSED
IMPORTANCE PRESIDENT BONGO ATTACHED TO IT AND POINTED OUT
HOW INCONCEIVABLE IT WOULD BE THAT PLANE COULD BE USED
FOR RHODESIAN TRADE AFTER EXCHANGE OF LETTERS WITH PRESI-
DENT GOWON. LATTER HAD RAISED NO OBJECTION TO PENDING
SALE, MADE CLEAR DISTINCTION WITH PREVIOUS SALE, AND
ADDED THAT HE HOPED TO EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH BONGO "ON THIS
AND OTHER MATTERS" AT NEXT OAU MEETING. HOW COULD BONGO
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UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES POSSIBLY GO BACK ON A WRITTEN PLEDGE

VOLUNTARILY GIVEN TO PRESIDENT OF OAU?

4. IF USG DENIED EXPORT LICENSE, HOWEVER, THIS WOULD BE SEIZED UPON, ACCORDING TO OKUMBA, BY THOSE WHO SOUGHT TO DAMAGE U.S.-GABONESE RELATIONS AND WHO WERE LYING IN WAIT FOR SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY.

5. I STRESSED, OF COURSE, HOW WRONG IT WOULD BE FOR GABON TO ALLOW EXCELLENT RELATIONS TO BE UPSET BY SUCH A MINOR MATTER. OKUMBA INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT I SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF SEEMINGLY MINOR ISSUES AND CLEVERNESS OF FORCES WORKING AGAINST U.S. INTERESTS IN GABON.

6. COMMENT: FONMIN OBVIOUSLY SEEKING TO USE TO MAXIMUM EVERY ARGUMENT HE CAN MUSTER TO OBTAIN FAVORABLE U.S. DECISION ON DC-8. EVEN ALLOWING FOR SOME EXAGGERATION ON HIS PART, HOWEVER, BELIEVE IT WOULD BE MISTAKE TO DISMISS HIS WARNING TOO LIGHTLY.
MCKESSON

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